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## Viewing cable 08MEXICO1082, SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08MEXICO1082**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08MEXICO1082</a>	<a href="#">2008-04-10 19:12</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Mexico</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://wikileaks.jornada.com.mx/notas/estrategias-para-combatir-el-terrorismo>

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RAYWMCV/ARMY HQ  
RHMFISS/CDR USNORTHCOM  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAHLA/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

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RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MEXICO 001082

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2017

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
GATES TO MEXICO CITY -- APRIL 29-30, 2008

Classified By: ADCM Charles Barclay for reasons 1.4. (B,D)

¶1. (SBU) On behalf of the U.S. Mission, let me warmly welcome you to Mexico City. Your visit comes at a key juncture, as Mexico's military takes stock of its role in Mexico and the world -- and looks at its evolving relationship with its U.S. counterpart in light of ongoing challenges and new responsibilities given it by President Calderon. You will encounter nuanced attitudes among your interlocutors regarding cooperation with the U.S. and mixed perspectives on many key global and regional security issues.

However your visit here will provide an excellent overview of Mexico's challenging security environment. Yours is the first SecDef visit in over a decade, and we believe you can move forward a number of key objectives during your visit,

#### Calderon's Key Security Challenge

¶2. (U) In the year and a half since he took office, President Calderon has taken aggressive steps to turn around an increasingly difficult domestic security situation -- one characterized in recent years by growing narco-related violence and the government's loss of initiative and ground to organized crime. The president has launched anti-drug operations in more than ten states, raised pay for the military, and replaced numerous high-ranking federal police officers. He initiated sweeping operational reforms among police elements and successfully sought legislation unifying federal police forces and reforming the criminal justice system. These actions and enhancements, when fully implemented, will strengthen GOM security capabilities across-the-board, make it more responsive to a wide variety of security threats and considerably strengthen the bilateral security partnership.

¶3. (U) Calderon has placed a premium on strengthening law enforcement cooperation with the U.S. Early during his term, he significantly expanded the number of criminal extraditions, instructed key members of his security team to build on his predecessor's already positive record of engagement with USG counterparts and worked closely with us to develop a joint response to the illegal counter-narcotics trade based on shared responsibility. The Merida Initiative under discussion in our congress this month is only the highest profile element of an emerging pattern of cooperation across the board, which is likely to take on momentum in coming years.

#### Mexican Military Assumes a Pivotal Role

¶4. (SBU) Mexico's military is pivotal to both Calderon's overall counter-narcotics strategy, and to the evolving bilateral security relationship. Mexicans traditionally have held the institution in high regard (it consistently polls as the country's most respected). They also expect much of it; soldiers and sailors perform a variety of civic action oriented tasks ranging from manning polling stations during elections to mounting responses to natural disasters. With many civilian law enforcement institutions frankly in disarray, or compromised outright by narco-traffickers, Mexico's military provides Calderon a natural choice as his initial counter-narcotics spearhead.

¶5. (SBU) Large-scale military deployments throughout the country have raised concerns, to be sure. Some argue that resource and personnel strains will undermine the institution's overall effectiveness. Others worry that counter-narcotics operations will expose officers and enlisted men to the corrosive temptations of corruption. Sporadic human rights abuses by soldiers in the past year occasioned heightened concern about this dimension to military action.

¶6. (SBU) Senior officers recognize all these concerns and have taken counter-measures, such as mobile, limited-duration deployments, astute personnel rotations and the establishment of a human rights ombudsman. Loyal to their president, they remain committed to remaining at the forefront of the counter-narcotics battle until a reformed civilian police structure is ready to assume the lead.

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And Contemplates Closer Mil-Mil Ties.

¶7. (C) As their role in defending their country from one potent transnational threat broadened in the past year, Mexican military officials also looked beyond Mexico's landscape at other such threats and began to acknowledge the importance of increased security cooperation with the U.S. Top military officials have in recent months told us President Calderon had instructed them to reach out to the U.S. They have shown interest in increasing training opportunities for their soldiers and sailors, asked us to broaden intelligence and information sharing and expressed their desire, to a variety of USG interlocutors, to find concrete ways to improve military to military ties while respecting national sovereignty.

¶8. (C) Both national security secretariats, SEDENA and SEMAR, played key roles in crafting the Merida Initiative package of GOM resource requests, participating fully in a lengthy inter-agency process that our civilian contacts told us was a milestone both in terms of getting military buy-in (SEDENA's in particular) for strengthened bilateral cooperation as well as advancing ties among often-competing law enforcement and security elements within the executive branch here.

Residual Attitudes Complicate Dialogue, However

¶9. (SBU) Despite their interest in strengthening ties to the U.S., you should know that many members of Mexico's armed forces remain wary of too closely identifying with U.S. security interests. We are making progress, but it will take time to overcome the historic and political differences have long inhibited military cooperation. This country's extensive experience with foreign interventions and the loss of over half of its territory to the U.S. following the Mexican-American War created permanent scars on the Mexican psyche, generating a sense of national insecurity and suspicion about American motives.

¶10. (SBU) Mexico's post-World War II foreign policy has reinforced these characteristics, placing a higher premium on nonintervention and sovereignty than on confronting and

resolving issues. This has often put Mexico at odds with the U.S. and limited our sense of common cause even as awareness here has increased that the U.S. and Mexico share vulnerabilities in the areas of international terrorism, narcotics trafficking, human smuggling and natural disasters. Many of your interlocutors will have well-defined perspectives on the global and regional security environments that do not reflect our own thinking.

¶11. (SBU) Mexico does not, for example, share our position on the need for robust, forward-based defense of our security interests in the Near East or South Asia. It places less emphasis on the potential threat to the region emanating from groups such as Al-Qaida. It is less nervous about Iranian diplomatic, economic and political outreach in the region than we are. Closer to home, Mexico has long sought to play a regional role that is independent of the U.S. With the exception of the Fox administration, Mexican governments -- including Calderon's -- have generally sought to maintain warm ties with Cuba. Similarly, the GOM has sought to avoid high-profile conflicts with the current Venezuelan government. Mexican officials and citizens alike have viewed the activities of populist governments, and even certain armed groups, in the region as relatively benign, thinking consistent with their country's own revolutionary past.

#### Key Goals for Your Visit

¶14. (CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE PARAGRAPH) That said, there are many concrete areas where you can make headway in moving key aspects of the bilateral military relationship forward. During your visit, I hope you can address the following issues:

--Intel/Information Sharing. We want to respond positively to the Mexican military's interest in improving our intelligence/information interface but need to enact formal agreements that safeguard sensitive material. I would

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encourage you to press forward on GIOSOMIA agreements, and assure our contacts of our willingness to do so; SEMAR is ready to sign but SEDENA is well behind.

-- Counter-Terrorism Assistance: In addition to potential Merida Initiative assistance, we have an immediate opportunity to use FY 08 1206 funds to boost the Mexican military's counter terrorism capabilities. This proposed \$30.0M support includes light surveillance aircraft, protective equipment, inflatable boats, and forensics training and equipment. It complements the support now being considered under the Merida Initiative and helps meet critical challenges posed by organized criminal networks employing terror tactics and which could be potentially exploited by global terrorist organizations. You should take the opportunity to underscore our desire to make this equipment available soonest, stressing that now is the time to move forward on an updated 505 agreement to make it possible. (Foreign Assistance Act Section 505 sets the terms and conditions regarding the use and inspection of transferred U.S. defense articles to which the Government of Mexico must adhere.)

-- Disaster Planning: Mexico provided disaster assistance to New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, and building our disaster relief cooperation is a common goal. Last year SEDENA specifically asked us for consultations related to crisis planning/preparedness. You should encourage this interest.

-- Status/accreditation for Military Exchange Officers: Placement of both SEDENA and SEMAR officers in U.S. military facilities (including NORTHCOM) marks an extremely positive development. We have similar officers working within Mexican institutions. However, our bilateral military education programs are at risk because of a disagreement over the

nature of accreditation for our respective exchange officers, notwithstanding a 1994 Memorandum of Understanding. This issue needs to be worked out in our own interagency, as well as with the GOM, but you can signal our strong desire to resolve it in the interest of strengthening exchanges in the future.

--Peace Keeping: Mexico is beginning to consider deploying its military in support of peace keeping operations -- a significant step forward in broadening the mission of the country's armed forces and developing an over-the-horizon worldview. Mexico is campaigning for election to the UN Security Council in 2009, and needs to demonstrate a greater commitment to international engagement. You should encourage your counterparts to begin seriously considering when they can engage in international peace keeping operations. You can also offer to help the Mexican army and navy develop their interoperability and other skills to prepare for eventual participation in IPOs.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: The Calderon administration has committed to significantly strengthening the security relationship with the United States. While it remains keen to balance this effort against its desire to be seen in the region as an influential -- and independent -- actor, U.S. and Mexico cooperation in broad areas of law enforcement has already deepened considerably under this dynamic president. The more we work together on such initiatives, the more we will develop shared outlooks on the range of security issues we face in the world. Your visit will punctuate an exciting juncture in the bilateral relationship and will significantly build momentum to even deeper military-to-military cooperation. Please let me know what I and my staff at the Embassy can do to make your time in Mexico as productive as possible. GARZA

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GARZA